XXIV

CONCERNING THE FEARLESS CURACA TASCALUÇA, WHO WAS ALMOST A GIANT, AND HOW HE RECEIVED THE GOVERNOR

The governor was in the pueblo Talise ten days, making efforts to learn about all the remaining regions through which he must go on his journey and of what was in the surrounding provinces on either side of this pueblo. Meanwhile a son of Tascaluça arrived, a youth eighteen years old, of such good stature that he was head and shoulders taller than any of the Spaniards or Indians in the army. He was accompanied by many nobles and brought a message from his father in which the latter offered the governor his friendship, person, and state, to be made use of at his pleasure. The general received him in a very friendly manner and treated him with great respect, both because of his rank and of his elegance and fine bearing. After delivering his message and learning that the adelantado desired to go where his father Tascaluça was, he said: "Sir, in order to go there, though we are no more than twelve or thirteen leagues away, there are two roads. I beg your lordship to order two Spaniards to go by way of one and return by the other, so that they may see which one of them is better for your lordship to take. I will furnish guides who will take and bring them back safely." This was done, and one of the two who went to discover the roads was Juan de Villalobos, who had gone in search of the gold mines and had found them to be brass. He was always most anxious to see first, ahead of his companions, whatever was to be found in this discovery, and in his eagerness he offered to travel the road twice or even three times.

When the two companions came back with the report concerning the roads, the governor took leave of the good Coça and his people, who were very sad because the Castilians were leaving their country. The general went by way of the road that they told him was the most suitable and crossed the Río de Talise in rafts and canoes, it being so full of water that they could not ford it. They marched two days, and early on the third day they came in sight of the pueblo where the curaca Tascaluça was. It was not the chief pueblo of this state, but one of the other, ordinary ones.

Learning from his runners that the governor was approaching, Tascaluça went out from the pueblo to meet him. He was on a small high hill, an eminence from which much of the country could be seen in every direction.

He had with him only a hundred nobles, richly dressed in fine mantles of various kinds of furs with long plumes on their heads, according to their usual manner of dress. They were all on foot except Tascaluça, who was seated in a chair such as the lords of those lands use. They are of wood about a *tercia* [one-third of a vara, approximately eleven inches] in height, with a somewhat concave seat and without a backrest or arms, all made in one piece.[20] Near him was a standard-bearer carrying a large banner made of yellow deerskin with three blue bars dividing it from one side to the other. It was the same size and shape as the standards the companies of cavalry carry in Spain.

It was a new thing for the Spaniards to see military insignia, for up to that time they had not seen a standard or a banner or a guidon.

The build of Tascaluça was like that of his son, for he towered over all the others by more than half a vara and appeared to be a giant, or was one, and the rest of his body and his face were in proportion to his height. His countenance was handsome and habitually wore such a severe expression that his aspect showed well the ferocity and nobility of his spirit. His shoulders corresponded to his stature, his waist was a little more than two tercias around, his arms and legs were straight, well set and proportionate to his body. In short, he was the tallest Indian and of the finest figure that these Castilians saw in all their travels through La Florida.

Tascaluça was waiting for the governor in the manner that has been told, and though the gentlemen and captains of the army who marched ahead of him reached the place where he was, he made no move toward them nor any sign whatever of civility, as if he did not see them and they were not passing by him. Thus he remained until the governor came up, and when he saw him approaching he stood up and advanced fifteen or twenty paces to receive him.

The general dismounted and embraced him, and the two remained in the same place talking while the army was being quartered in the pueblo and outside of it, because there was not room for all the men in it. Then the two went together to the governor's house, which was near the house of Tascaluça, where he left the general and went with his Indians.

The Spaniards rested in that pueblo two days, and on the third they proceeded on their journey. As a sign of his great friendship for the governor,

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[20]Wooden stools, though only rarely observed in the aboriginal Southeast, were an important emblem of chieftaincy throughout the circum-Caribbean area, particularly in the Greater Antilles.

Tascaluça wanted to accompany him, saying that he would do so in order to see that he would be well served in his country. The governor ordered that a saddle horse be made ready for him, as he had always done with the curacas, lords of vassals, who had traveled with him, though we have neglected to mention it until now. Among all the horses that were with the army not one was found that could bear and carry Tascaluça, because of his large body and not because he was fat, for as we said above his girth was less than a vara, nor was he corpulent with old age, because he was scarcely forty years old. Making further search for a horse that Tascaluça could ride, the Castilians found a hack belonging to the governor that was used as a pack horse because it was so strong; this horse could carry Tascaluça. He was so tall that when he mounted the horse his feet cleared the ground by only a handbreadth.

The governor was no little relieved that a horse had been found that Tascaluça could ride, and he was not disturbed because they mounted him on a pack horse. Thus they marched three daily journeys of four leagues each, at the end of which they reached the principal pueblo, called Tascaluça, from which the province and its lord took their names. The pueblo was strong, being situated on a peninsula the river formed; the stream was the same one that passed by Talise, and it became increasingly large and swift.

They spent the following day in crossing it, and because of the scarcity of rafts, it took almost the entire day. They camped half a league from the river in a beautiful valley.

At this camp two Spaniards were missing, one of them being Juan de Villalobos, whom we have mentioned twice. It was not known what became of them, though it was suspected that the Indians, finding them some distance from the camp, had killed them, because Villalobos, wherever he might be, was very fond of going about the country to see what he could find, a thing that costs the lives of all those who indulge in this bad habit in time of war.

The absence of the two Spaniards was a bad sign, and those who noted the novelty of the event feared that Tascaluça's friendship was not as true and loyal as he pretended it to be. To this unfavorable sign was added another, worse one, which was that when his Indians were questioned about the two missing Spaniards they replied very impudently, asking whether they had been appointed to guard them or what obligation they had to tell them about their Castilians. The governor was unwilling to insist further upon searching for them because he understood that they were dead, and that business would serve only to disturb and alienate the cacique and his vassals. It

seemed better to him to leave the investigation and the punishment for a more favorable occasion.

At dawn on the following day the governor sent out two soldiers selected from among the best in the whole army. One was named Gonzalo Quadrado Xaramillo, an hidalgo who was a native of Zafra, an able and experienced man in all respects to whom could be entrusted implicitly any serious affair of peace or of war; the other was Diego Vázquez, a native of Villanueva de Barcarrota, also a man of good repute and entirely trustworthy. He sent them with orders to go to see what was in a pueblo called Mauvila, which was a league and half from that camp. There the curaca had many people ostensibly in order to better serve and entertain the governor and his Spaniards. He ordered them to wait for him in the pueblo, as he was marching after them immediately.

XXV

THE GOVERNOR ARRIVES AT MAUVILA AND FINDS INDICATIONS OF TREASON

As soon as the two soldiers left the camp, the governor ordered a hundred cavalry and a hundred infantry to prepare to go with him and with Tascaluça, both of them desiring to be in the vanguard that day. He left orders that the maese de campo follow immediately after him with the rest of the army. The latter was late in leaving, and his men marched scattered through the country hunting and enjoying themselves, quite overlooking the possibility of a battle because of the undisturbed peace that they had enjoyed throughout the summer, up to that time.

The governor, who was marching with more caution, reached the pueblo of Mauvila at eight o'clock in the morning. It contained few houses, scarcely more than eighty, but they were all very large and some had a capacity of fifteen hundred persons, others of a thousand, and the smaller ones of more than five hundred. We call a house any building of only one room, like a church, for the Indians do not build their houses by connecting several rooms together; but each one according to his ability builds a house with one room like a *sala,* and this has its apartments containing the necessary offices, which are few enough. These single rooms they call houses. Since those of this pueblo had been erected as a frontier and strong place and for displaying

the power of the lord, they were very handsome. Most of them belonged to the cacique, and the others to the most important and richest men of his whole state.

The pueblo was situated on a very beautiful plain and had an enclosure three estados high, which was made of logs as thick as oxen. They were driven into the ground so close together that they touched one another. Other beams, longer and not so thick, were placed crosswise on the outside and inside and attached with split canes and strong cords. On top they were daubed with a great deal of mud and packed down with long straw, a mixture that filled all the cracks and open spaces between the logs and their fastenings in such a manner that it really looked like a wall finished with a mason's trowel. At intervals of fifty paces around this enclosure were towers capable of holding seven or eight men who could fight in them. The lower part of the enclosure, to the height of an estado, was full of loopholes for shooting arrows at those on the outside. The pueblo had only two gates, one on the east and the other on the west. In the middle was a spacious plaza around which were the largest and most important houses.[21]

The governor and the giant Tascaluça arrived at this plaza, and the latter, as soon as he had dismounted, summoned the interpreter Juan Ortiz and, pointing with his finger, said to him: "The governor will lodge in this large house, together with the gentlemen and nobles whom his lordship wishes to have with him, and his servants and equipage will be put in this other one that is near it. An arrow-shot outside of the pueblo my vassals have erected many good shelters made of branches for the rest of the people, in which they can be comfortably lodged, because the pueblo is small and we cannot all get into it." The general replied that as soon as the maese de campo arrived he would send [the men] into their quarters, and do everything else as he had arranged it. Thereupon Tascaluça entered one of the largest houses on the plaza where, as was learned afterward, he had the captains of his council of war. The governor and the cavalry and infantry who came with him stayed in the plaza, and they ordered the horses taken outside the pueblo until learning where they were to put them.

Gonzalo Quadrado Xaramillo, who, as we have said, had gone ahead to

[21]Stripped of its blatant exaggerations, Garcilaso's description of Mabila accords well with archaeologically known fortified native towns of the late prehistoric Southeast. The severest faults lie in the extraordinary size claimed for the houses, and in the size of the vertical members of the palisade. All archaeologically excavated examples of town palisades in the Southeast reveal evidence of closely spaced vertical posts of relatively small diameter.

see and reconnoiter the pueblo of Mauvila, as soon as the governor dismounted came up to him and said: "Sir, I have examined this pueblo carefully, and the things that I have seen and noted in it give me no assurance whatever of the friendship of this curaca and of his vassals; rather they arouse my suspicion that they have plotted some treason, for in these few houses that your lordship sees there are more than ten thousand chosen warriors. There is not a single old man or Indian servant among them, but all are warriors, nobles and young men. They are all supplied with a great many arms, and besides those which each one has for himself many of these houses are full of them [arms]. They are a common depository of arms. Furthermore, although these Indians have many women with them, all are young and none of them have children nor is there a single child in the whole pueblo, but they are free and unimpeded by any encumbrance. The country for a harquebus-shot surrounding the pueblo (as your lordship will have seen) they have cleaned and cleared of growth in such a curious manner that they have even pulled up the grass roots by hand, which seems to me to be a sign that they intend to give us battle and wish to have nothing in their way. There may be added to these bad signs the death of the two Spaniards who were missing at the last camp. For all these reasons it seems to me that your lordship ought to proceed cautiously with this Indian and not trust him. Though there was nothing else except the unfriendly countenances and still more unfavorable attitude that he and his people have hitherto shown us, and the arrogance and impudence with which they speak to us, it would be enough to warn us not to consider his friendship genuine, but false and deceitful."

The general's reply was to order that the word be passed from one to another among those who were there, warning them all to be secretly on their guard, and he particularly commanded Gonzalo Quadrado that as soon as the maese de campo arrived he was to notify him of what he had seen in the pueblo so that he might act for the best interests of all.

Alonso de Carmona in his manuscript volume gives a very long account of the journey that these Spaniards made, and he with them, from the province of Cofachiqui to that of Coça. He tells of the grandeurs of the province of Coça and of the generosity of its lord, and names many of the pueblos along that road, though not all that I have named. Concerning the stature of Tascaluça, he says that almost nothing was lacking to make a giant of him, and that he was very well favored. Juan Coles, in speaking of this huge fellow, says the following: "When we arrived at the province of this lord Tascaluça he came out to receive us peacefully. He was a large man, whose

shin from the foot to the knee was as high as any other very tall men from the foot to the waist; he had eyes like an ox. He mounted a horse on the march, and the horse could not carry him. The adelantado dressed him in scarlet and gave him a very handsome cape of his own." Having told about the scarlet clothing, Alonso de Carmona adds these words:

> When the governor and Tascaluça entered Mauvila the Indians came out to receive them with dances and ceremonies to better dissemble their treason, the most important people taking part in them. When that entertainment ended another dance took place, performed by marvelously beautiful women, because as I have said those Indians are very well favored, and the women so much so that afterward, when we left that country and went to México, Governor Moscoso took an Indian from this province of Mauvila, who was a very handsome and graceful woman. She could compete in beauty with the most elegant from Spain who were in all México, and thus because of her extreme beauty, those ladies of México sent to beg the governor to send her because they wished to see her. He did so very gladly because it pleased him that they should envy her.

All these are words of Alonso de Carmona as he himself says them, and I am glad to include these and all that appear in the *History* in the names of these two soldiers, who were eyewitnesses, so that it may be seen how clearly they show that their accounts and ours correspond. A little further on Alonso de Carmona tells of the notice that we said that Gonzalo Quadrado Xaramillo (though he does not name him) gave to Governor Hernando de Soto. He adds that he told him how on that morning and on many others before the Indians had gone out to the fields to drill, and how every day before the skirmish and military exercise a captain harangued them.

The cacique Tascaluça (as has been said), as soon as he and the governor entered the pueblo, went into a house where his council of war was, waiting to conclude and decide upon the plan that they were to follow in killing the Spaniards, for that curaca had determined long since to kill them in the pueblo of Mauvila. For this purpose he had assembled the warriors that he had there, not only from among his vassals and subjects but also from the neighboring and outlying [provinces], so that all might enjoy the triumph and glory of having killed the Castilians and might have their part of the spoils that they carried. Those who were not his vassals had come on this condition.

When Tascaluça was among his captains, then, and the chief men of his army, he told them that they must determine quickly how they would carry

out that purpose; whether they would immediately cut the throats of the Spaniards who were then in the pueblo and of the others after them, as they arrived, or whether they would wait until all of them had come. Because of their own strength and bravery they expected to be able to behead all of them together as easily as they could when they were separated into the three divisions of vanguard, center, and rear guard, into which the army was formed on the march. They must decide at once, because he only waited upon their resolution.

XXVI

THE MEMBERS OF TASCALUÇA'S COUNCIL DETERMINE TO KILL THE SPANIARDS. AN ACCOUNT OF THE BEGINNING OF THE BATTLE THAT TOOK PLACE

The captains of the council were divided regarding the proposals that Tascaluça presented to them. Some said that they ought not to wait until all the Castilians should be together, so that their enterprise would not be made more difficult, but that they ought to kill at once the ones who were there and then the rest as they should arrive. Others who were braver said that it seemed like a kind of cowardice and a sign of fear and even smelled of treason to wish to kill them when they were divided, but that inasmuch as they had the same advantage in bravery, dexterity, and lightness as in numbers, they should allow them to come together and behead all of them at one blow; that this would be more honorable and more befitting to Tascaluça's grandeur because it would be a greater exploit.

The first captains replied, saying that it was not a good thing to risk all the Spaniards joining together and putting themselves in a better defensive position, and killing some of the Indians. However few there might be, they would feel more the loss of a few friends than the satisfaction that the death of all their enemies would give them. It was enough to gain the end that they desired, which was to cut all their throats, and it could be accomplished better and more surely the more leisure they had for doing it.

This last counsel prevailed, for though the other was more in line with Tascaluça's arrogance and bravado, he was so desirous of seeing the Spaniards beheaded that any delay, however short it might be, seemed long to

him. Thus it was agreed that for carrying out their decision they would seize any opportunity that was offered them, and that if there were none, they would do it arbitrarily, for it was not necessary to seek reasons for killing enemies.

While Tascaluça's council was discussing the death of the Spaniards, the governor's servants, who had gone on ahead and hurried their march and had been lodged in one of the large houses that faced the plaza, had prepared breakfast, or dinner, for they were all one, and summoned his lordship to eat, as it was now the hour. The general sent a message to Tascaluça by Juan Ortiz asking that he come to breakfast, for he had always eaten with the governor. Juan Ortiz delivered the message at the door of the house where the curaca was because the Indians would not let him come inside. Having delivered the message, they replied that their lord would come out soon.

After some time had passed Juan Ortiz again repeated his message at the door and received the same reply. Then after another interval he asked again, for the third time, that they tell Tascaluça to come out, for the governor was awaiting him with the food on the table. Then an Indian came out of the house, who must have been the captain-general, and spoke with extraordinary arrogance and haughtiness, saying: "Who are these thieves and vagabonds here calling to my lord Tascaluça to come out, come out, speaking with as little reverence as if they were talking to another like themselves? By the Sun and the Moon, one is not able to endure the boldness of these devils, and it is only just that they die for it today, being cut to pieces to put an end to their iniquity and tyranny!"

The captain had scarcely spoken these words when another Indian who came out after him placed a bow and arrows in his hands so that he could begin to fight. The Indian general, throwing back over his shoulders the folds of a very handsome mantle of marten-skins he wore fastened at his throat, took the bow and, placing an arrow in it, turned with it to shoot at a group of Spaniards who were in the street.

Captain Baltasar de Gallegos, who happened to be near, to one side of the door by which the Indian came out, seeing his treason and that of his cacique, and that the whole pueblo was implicated in it, raised a loud alarm and drew his sword. He gave the Indian a slash from the left shoulder downward that, as he wore no defensive armor nor even any clothing except the mantle, laid open his whole side, and with his entrails all protruding he immediately fell dead, without having a chance to shoot the arrow.

When this Indian went out of the house to speak those insulting words that he said against the Castilians, he had already given the Indians the word

to fight, and thus there came out of all the houses in the pueblo, principally those that surrounded the plaza, six or seven thousand warriors. They fell with such impetus and courage upon the few Spaniards who were going carelessly through the principal street by which they had entered, that they very easily sent them flying, as they said, without allowing them to put their feet on the ground, until they drove them outside the gate more than two hundred paces into the fields. So fierce and bold was this inundation of Indians that it overwhelmed the Spaniards, though it is true that in all that time there was not a single Spaniard who turned his back on the enemy. On the other hand, they fought with all good spirit, valor, and strength, defending themselves and withdrawing because it was impossible for them to make a stand and resist the cruel and arrogant violence with which the Indians rushed out of the houses and of the pueblo.

Among the first Indians who left the house from which the Indian captain came was a young noble about eighteen years of age. Fastening his eyes upon Baltasar de Gallegos, he shot six or seven arrows at him with great fury and swiftness, and though he had more, seeing that he had not killed or wounded him with those, because the Spaniard was well protected with armor, he grasped his bow in both hands and closed with him, he being close by, and gave him three or four blows on the head with such velocity and force that he made the blood flow from under his helmet down his forehead. Baltasar de Gallegos, seeing himself so mistreated and to prevent his abusing him further, very hastily stabbed him twice in the breast, and with this his enemy fell dead.

It was surmised that this young Indian must have been the son of that captain who was the first to come out to the battle, and that it was with the desire of avenging his father's death that he had fought Baltasar de Gallegos with such courage and anxiety as he showed to kill him. But as a matter of fact all of them fought with the same eagerness to kill or wound the Spaniards.

The mounted soldiers, who, as we said, had their horses staked outside the walls of the pueblo, seeing the impetus and fury with which the Indians fell upon them, ran out of the pueblo to get their horses. Those who were most dexterous and made the greatest effort succeeded in mounting them. Others who underrated this avalanche of the enemy and its swiftness, being unable to mount their horses, contented themselves with loosing them by cutting the reins or halters so that they could run away before the Indians shot them. Others, still more unfortunate, who were unable either to mount their horses or even to cut the halters, left them tied where the enemy shot

them with arrows, with extreme satisfaction and rejoicing. As the Indians were so numerous, half of them carried on the fight against the Castilians and half of them busied themselves in killing the horses that they found tied and in gathering up all the baggage and possessions belonging to the Christians that had already arrived and was piled against the wall of the pueblo and scattered around the plain, awaiting storage. The enemy got possession of all of this, without anything escaping them except the belongings of Captain Andrés de Vasconcelos, which had not yet arrived.

The Indians put all this in their houses and left the Spaniards despoiled of everything they were bringing. They had nothing left except their lives and what they wore on their persons, for which they fought with all the good spirit and strength that were necessary in such a crisis, though they were unused to arms because of the long peace that they had enjoyed from Apalache to that place, and had not expected to fight that day because of the false friendship that Tascaluça had shown them. But neither the one nor the other was enough to make them fail in their duty.

XXVII

WHERE ARE RECOUNTED THE EVENTS OF THE FIRST THIRD OF THE BATTLE OF MAUVILA

The few riders among those who left the pueblo who were able to mount their horses, with a few others who had arrived from the march, unexpectedly finding such a cruel battle, joined together and went to resist the impetus and fury with which the Indians were pursuing the Spaniards who were fighting on foot. These latter, however much they tried, could not prevent the Indians from driving them forward across the plain, until they saw the horses charging them. Then they held up a little and gave our men a chance to rally and form two divisions, one of infantry and one of cavalry. They fell upon the Indians with such courage and shame for the past affront that they did not stop until they had shut them [the Indians] up again in the pueblo. But when they attempted to enter, such a shower of arrows and stones rained upon them from the wall and its loopholes that they withdrew by common accord.

Seeing them retire, the Indians came out again with the same impetuosity as the first time, some through the gate and others jumping down from the

wall. They engaged our men rashly, even grasping the cavalrymen's lances, and the Spaniards were forced, in spite of themselves, to retire more than two hundred paces from the wall.

As has been said, the Spaniards withdrew without turning their backs, fighting with all discipline and good order, because in this lay their salvation. They were few and lacked those who were behind in the rear guard, which had not yet come up.

Our men at once charged the enemy and drove them back toward the pueblo, but they made a strong attack from the wall, from which the Spaniards came to understand that it was better to fight them on the plain at a distance from the pueblo than near it. Thus from that time on, when they retired they purposely yielded more ground than the Indians forced them to lose, in order to draw them away from the pueblo so that by their retreat the cavalry would have more ground and room where they could charge them with lances. First one and then the other, attacking and withdrawing in this manner, as if in a tournament with reed spears—though it was a very cruel and bloody battle—and again standing their ground, Indians and Spaniards fought for three hours, savagely killing and wounding each other.

In these attacks and retreats that were thus made, there rode behind and among the Spaniards a Dominican friar named Fray Juan de Gallegos, the brother of Captain Baltasar de Gallegos. He was not attempting to fight, but he wished to give the horse to his brother, and with this desire he shouted to him to come out and mount the horse.

The captain, who had never ceased to be among the first, as he had happened to be at the beginning of the battle, made no effort to reply to his brother because he was unable to do so, nor would his reputation and honor permit him to leave the post that he occupied. In these advances and retreats the good friar made in his anxiety to help his brother with the horse, during an assault by the Indians one of them caught sight of him, and though he was some distance away he discharged an arrow at the moment when the friar happened to turn his horse to flee from them. It struck him in the back and wounded him, though slightly, because he wore his two cowls and all the other robes that those of his order usually wear, which are many, and over all this he had a large felt hat that was fastened around his neck with a cord and hung down over his shoulders. The arrow wound the Indian gave him with such good will was not mortal because of all these defenses. The friar took warning from it and went off some distance, fearing that they might shoot him again.

There were many wounds and deaths in this obstinate battle, but the one

that caused the Spaniards the greatest regret and grief, both because of the misfortune through which it happened and because of the person upon whom it fell, was that of Don Carlos Enríquez, a gentleman from Xerez de Badajoz. He was married to a niece of the governor and, because of his great virtue and affability, he was esteemed and beloved by all; we have mentioned him on another occasion. From the beginning of the battle this gentleman had fought like a very valiant soldier during all the attacks and retreats, and his horse, having been wounded in the last retreat by an arrow that had gone into one side of his breast above the breast-leather, in order to draw it out he changed his lance from his right hand to his left, and grasping the arrow, pulled at it. With his body extended forward along the horse's neck he made an effort, turning his head slightly over his left shoulder so that his throat was uncovered at an unfortunate moment. Just then a stray arrow with a flint barb fell and happened to strike him in the small part of the throat that was unprotected and without armor, for all the rest of his body was well armored. It wounded him in such a manner that the poor gentleman at once fell down from his horse with his throat cut, though he did not die until the next day.

With such events incident to battles, Indians and Castilians fought with many deaths on both sides, although the mortality was greater among the Indians because they had no defensive arms. After fighting for more than three hours on the plain, the latter realized that they were getting the worst of the battle on an open field because of the damage that the horses were doing them, and they all decided to withdraw toward the pueblo, close the gates, and station themselves on the walls. This they did, calling to one another to assemble from every direction.

On seeing the Indians closed up, the governor ordered that all the mounted soldiers, because they were better armed than the infantry, dismount and attack the pueblo, taking shields to defend themselves and axes to break in the gates (most of them carried axes with them), and as brave Spaniards do what they could to win it.

Instantly a squadron of two hundred cavalry was formed, which attacked the gate, broke it down with axes, and entered through it with no little damage to themselves.

Other Spaniards who could not go in through the gate because it was narrow, so as not to wait in the fields and lose time in fighting, made vigorous strokes at the wall with their axes and knocked off the mixture of mud and straw that was on top of it, uncovering the transverse logs and the fastenings by which they were attached. Assisting one another they climbed up

by them, got over the wall, and entered the pueblo to help their men.

The Indians, on seeing the Castilians inside the pueblo that they had considered impregnable, and that they were gaining it, fought with the spirit of desperate men, in the streets as well as from the roofs, from which they did much damage to the Christians. The latter, in order to defend themselves from those who were fighting from the flat roofs or terraces and to insure that they would not attack them from behind, and also in order that the Indians might not come back to gain the houses that they were taking, decided to set fire to them. They did so and, as they were made of straw, in a moment a great deal of flame and smoke arose, which added itself to [the confusion of] the blood, the many wounds, and the massacre that was taking place in such a small pueblo.

As soon as they closed themselves up in the pueblo, many of the Indians ran to the house that had been designated for the governor's service and chamber, which they had not attacked hitherto because it seemed to them that they had it safely [in their hands]. Thus they now went very boldly to enjoy the spoils that were in it. But they found the house well defended, because inside were three crossbowmen and five halberdiers of the governor's guard who were accustomed to accompany his equipage and servants, and one of the first Indians whom they captured in that country, who was now a friend and a faithful servant, and as such carried his bow and arrows to be ready when it should be necessary to fight against those of his own nation in the favor and service of the foreigner. There also happened to be in the house two priests, a cleric and a friar, and two of the governor's slaves. All these people stationed themselves to defend the house, the priests with their prayers and the seculars with arms, and they fought so courageously that the enemy could not gain the door. They then decided to go in through the roof and accordingly opened it in three or four places, but the crossbowmen and the Indian archer worked so effectively that all those who dared enter through the holes in the roof they shot down dead or badly wounded, as they appeared. These few Spaniards were conducting this spirited defense when the general and his captains and soldiers came up to the door of the house, fighting, and drove the enemy away from it. Thereupon those in the house were released and went out to the field, giving thanks to God for having saved them from such danger.

XXVIII

WHICH CONTINUES THROUGH THE SECOND THIRD OF THE BATTLE OF MAUVILA

When the things that we recounted in the last chapter took place Indians and Castilians had been fighting without ceasing for more than four hours, killing one another most cruelly. For it seemed that the more injury the Indians received, the more they persisted, and despairing of their lives, instead of surrendering they fought with greater eagerness to kill the Spaniards; and they, seeing the obstinacy, persistence, and rage of the Indians, wounded and killed them without any pity.

The governor, who had fought throughout the four hours on foot at the head of his men, went out of the pueblo and mounted a horse. So as to increase the fears of the enemy and the spirit and courage of his men, he went back into the pueblo, accompanied by Nuño Tovar who was also mounted, and both riders, calling the names of Our Lady and St. James the Apostle ["Santiago" (St. James) was a traditional battle cry of the Spanish] and shouting loudly to their men to make way, broke through the enemy squadron from one side to the other as it was fighting in the principal street and in the plaza. Then they turned back upon them, spearing them on either side, like the brave and skillful soldiers that they were.

During these attacks and withdrawals, at a time when the governor was standing in his stirrups to throw a lance at an Indian, another who was behind him shot an arrow above the hind bow of the saddle, which struck in the small unprotected space the general exposed between the saddlebow and the breastplate, and though he wore a coat of mail, the arrow broke through it and penetrated some six inches into the left hip. The good general, alike in order not to let it be known that he was wounded so that his men would not become alarmed because of this hurt, and because in the press of the fighting he had no opportunity to pull out the arrow, fought with it through all the rest of the battle, which was almost five hours, without being able to sit in the saddle, which was no small proof of the valor of this captain and of his skill in horsemanship.

They shot another arrow through Nuño Tovar's lance, which as it was slender it passed through the middle near the hand, and the haft of the lance was so fine that it was not split, but it appeared rather that the arrow was a gimlet that had bored delicately through it. Thus when the arrow was later

cut away on either side the lance served as well as before. Though of little importance, this shot is described because such shots are seldom made, and also because it shows what we have said many times about the ferocity and skill that these Indians of La Florida have with bows and arrows.

These two gentlemen, although they fought all day and repeatedly broke through the squadrons that the Indians formed and reformed at every step, and were present at the most dangerous crises of this battle, received no other wounds than those that we have described, which was no small good fortune.

The fire that they had set to the houses increased momentarily and did the Indians much damage, for as they were numerous and could not all fight in the streets and plaza, because they could not all get into them, they fought from the terraces and flat roofs, and the fire trapped and burned them there or forced them in fleeing from it to fling themselves down from the terraces.

It did no less damage in the houses where it came in through the door, for as has been said, they were large rooms with only one door, and when the fire blocked it those who were inside could not get out and were burned and suffocated by the fire and smoke. Many women who were closed up in the houses perished in this way.

The fire was equally harmful in the streets, because sometimes the wind blew the flame and smoke over the Indians, blinding them and helping the Spaniards to drive them back without their being able to resist. Again it would turn in favor of the Indians against the Christians and enable them to regain the part of the street that they had lost. Thus the fire went favoring now one side and now the other, and increasing the mortality of the battle.

The fighting was sustained on both sides with the cruelty and fury that has been seen until four o'clock in the afternoon, the battle having been continuous for seven hours. At this hour the Indians, seeing how many of their men they had killed by fire and the sword and that for lack of fighters their strength was decreasing while that of the Castilians was increasing, summoned the women and ordered them to take up some of the many arms that were lying in the streets and set about taking vengeance for the death of their people; and if they could not avenge them, they could at least see to it that all of them should die before becoming the slaves of the Spaniards.

When they gave this command to the women many of them had already been fighting bravely for some time along with their husbands, but with this new order not one remained who did not go to the battle, taking up arms that they found lying on the ground, of which there was an abundance. Many of the swords, halberds, and lances that the Spaniards had lost came

into their hands, and they turned them against their owners, wounding them with their own arms. They also took up bows and arrows and shot them with no less skill and ferocity than their husbands. They stationed themselves in front of the latter to fight, and resolutely exposed themselves to death with much more temerity than the men. They thrust themselves among the enemy's weapons with great fury and recklessness, showing well that the desperation and courage of women in what they have determined to do is greater and more heedless than that of men. The Spaniards, however, seeing that the Indian women were doing this more with the desire of dying than of conquering, and also out of regard for the fact that they were women, abstained from wounding and killing them.

While this long and stubborn battle lasted, the trumpets, fifes, and drums did not cease to sound the alarm very insistently, so that the Spaniards who had stayed behind in the rear guard would hurry to the assistance of their men.

The maese de campo and those who were coming with him marched scattered about the country hunting and enjoying themselves, ignorant of what was going on in Mauvila. But when they heard the noise of the military musical instruments and the shouts and outcries that sounded inside and outside the pueblo, and saw the clouds of smoke that rose up in front of them, suspecting what it might be, they passed the word back to the last ones and all of them marched at top speed, arriving during the last part of the battle.

Among them came Captain Diego de Soto, the governor's nephew and the brother-in-law of Don Carlos Enríquez, whose misfortune we have already told. When he learned what had happened to his brother-in-law, whom he loved devotedly, the grief that he felt at such a loss made him desire to avenge it. He leaped down from his horse and, taking up a shield, entered the pueblo sword in hand and went where the battle was raging most fiercely and cruelly, which was in the principal street, though it is true that in all the others there was no lack of blood, fire, and death, for the whole pueblo was filled with savage combat.

At four o'clock in the afternoon Diego de Soto entered the battle at that place, but it was to imitate the misfortune of his brother-in-law rather than to avenge his death. It was not a time for private vengeance but for the wrath of military fortune, which, apparently in abhorrence of having granted them so much peace in the land of such cruel enemies, now desired to give them all in one day the warfare that would have sufficed for a year, and perhaps it would not have been so disastrous to them as that of this day alone, as we

shall see later. Few or no battles between Spaniards and Indians have taken place in the New World that would equal this one, both in the stubborn persistence of the fighting and in the length of time that it lasted, unless it were that of the presumptuous Pedro de Valdivia, of which we shall tell in the history of El Perú if God shall be pleased to grant us life.

As we were saying, then, Captain Diego de Soto came to the thick of the battle and had scarcely entered it when they shot him in the eye with an arrow, which came out at the back of his head. He fell to the ground at once and lay in agony without speaking until the next day, when he died, without their having been able to remove the arrow. This was the revenge that he took for his relative Don Carlos, to the greater grief and loss of the general and of the whole army, for these two gentlemen were most worthy nephews of such an uncle.

XXIX

IT TELLS OF THE END OF THE BATTLE OF MAUVILA, AND IN WHAT BAD CONDITION THE SPANIARDS WERE LEFT

The battle that took place in the country was no less bloody; it was for this purpose that the fields had been cleared of timber and cleaned even to uprooting the grass and herbs. Having enclosed themselves in the pueblo to make a defense, the Indians realized that because of their numbers they would hinder one another in fighting, and that because the space was limited[22] they could not profit by their lightness and agility. Thus many of them agreed to go out to the fields, letting themselves down from the walls, where they fought with all good spirit and courage and eagerness for victory. But they soon recognized that their plan was ill-advised, because if their lightness gave them an advantage over the Spanish infantry, those on horseback were their superiors and speared them in the field entirely at their pleasure, without their being able to defend themselves, for these Indians do not use pikes (although they have them), which are the defense against cavalry, be-

[22]The Varners' translation of this passage, in speaking of "the narrowness of the place," has sometimes led to the unwarranted supposition that the layout of Mabila was narrow or oblong. Varner and Varner, *The Florida of the Inca*, 371; Caleb Curren, *In Search of De Soto's Trail*, Bulletins of Discovery no. 1 (Camden: Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Commission, 1986), 11.

cause they had not permitted themselves to believe that the enemy would come up within reach of the pikes, but expected to assault and kill them with arrows a good distance before they should reach them. This is the chief reason they use the bow and arrows more than any other weapons. Thus a great many of them died on the field, ill-advised in their ferocity and vain presumption. The Spaniards of the rear guard came up, cavalry and infantry, and all attacked the Indians who were fighting in the field, and after engaging in battle for a long period of time and receiving many deaths and wounds—for though they arrived late they received a very good share of them, as we saw in the case of Diego de Soto and shall soon see in others—they routed and killed most of the Indians. Some escaped by flight.

At this time, which was now nearly sunset, the shouts and cries of those who were fighting in the pueblo still sounded. Many of those who were mounted entered to aid their men; others remained outside to be ready for whatever might be needed. Hitherto for lack of room none of the cavalry had fought inside the pueblo except the general and Nuño Tovar. Now, therefore, many mounted men entered and scattered through the streets, for there was work for them to do in all of them. Breaking through the Indians who were fighting there, they killed them.

Ten or twelve horsemen advanced along the principal street where the battle was fiercest and bloodiest, and where there was still a squadron of Indian men and women who were fighting most desperately, for now they attempted nothing else except to die fighting. The cavalry charged upon them, and taking them from behind they broke them more easily and passed through them so furiously that they knocked down many Spaniards in the wake of the Indians. They were fighting hand to hand with the enemy, all of whom they killed, for none wished to surrender or give up their arms, but to die with them, fighting like good soldiers.

This was the last encounter of the battle in which the Spaniards ended by conquering, just as the sun went down, having fought nine hours in both places without ceasing. This was the day of the blessed St. Luke the Evangelist in the year 1540, and on the same day, though many years later, this account of it was written.

At the same moment the battle ended, one of the Indians who had been fighting in the pueblo, dazed with his own struggle and courage, had not noticed what had happened to his people until, coming to himself, he saw them all dead. Since he saw himself alone and now unable to conquer, he attempted to save his life by fleeing, and with this desire he ran to the wall and jumped up on it with much agility, so as to escape across the fields. But

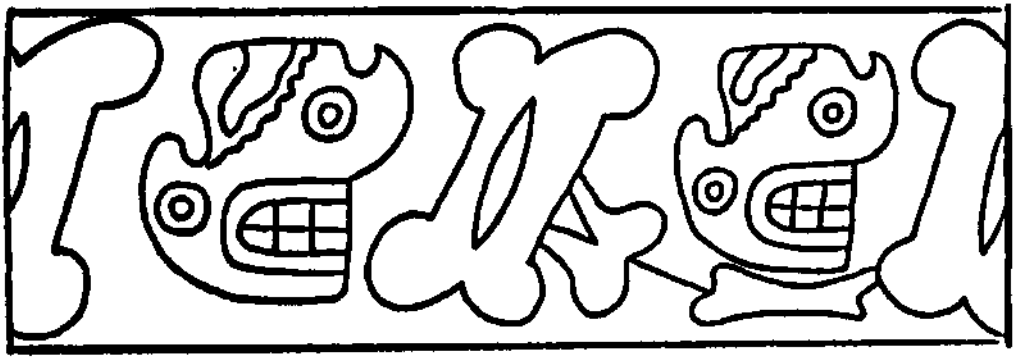
seeing the Castilians on foot and on horses who were there and the massacre that had occurred and that he could not escape, he preferred death to giving himself up as prisoner, and quickly taking the cord from his bow, he fastened it to the branches of a tree that was growing on the wall in the spaces between the logs, which the Indians had left there as a point to reckon from in enclosing the pueblo. This tree was not the only one growing on the wall, for there were many others like it that they had left there purposely, which greatly beautified the wall.

Fastening one end of the cord, then, to a branch of the tree, and the other around his neck, he let himself fall down from the wall so quickly that, although some Spaniards desired to rescue him so that he would not die, they could not get there in time. Thus the Indian was hanged by his own hand, causing amazement by his action and by the certainty that he who would hang himself would be even more desirous of hanging the Castilians if he could. From this may be well surmised the recklessness and desperation with which all of them fought, for the one who was left alive killed himself.

The battle over, Governor Hernando de Soto, though he came out of it badly wounded, took care to order that the bodies of the dead Spaniards be recovered for burial on the next day and that the wounded be treated. There was such a lack of necessities for treating them that many died before they could be assisted, for it was found by actual count that there were 1,770 or more wounds that required treatment. These included only the ones that were dangerous and required the service of a surgeon, such as those that penetrated the body cavity, or a broken skull, or arrow wounds in the elbow, knee, or ankle, from which it was feared the wounded man might be left lame or maimed.

The number of such wounds found was that which we have stated. Of those which were through the calf from one side to the other, or through the thigh or the hips, or through the large or fleshy part of the arm, though made by lances, and of the knife wounds or stabs that did not endanger life, they took no account and did not have the surgeon treat them. The wounded themselves treated one another, though they might be captains or officials of the hacienda real. There was an almost countless number of such wounds, for there was scarcely a man who was not wounded, and most of them had five or six wounds, and many ten or twelve.

Having recounted (though badly) the events of the bloody battle of Mauvila and the victory that our men won there, from which they escaped with so many wounds as we have said, I must refer in what remains of this chapter to the consideration of those who may read it, so that they can



Warfare and Death: A Mississippian Motif. This native design, taken from an incised pottery beaker excavated in Alabama, illustrates a common artistic theme in Mississippian culture: skulls and forearm bones. The skulls bear conventional marks indicating that the victims had been scalped. (From the University of Alabama Museum of Natural History collections, Moundville Archaeological Park, Moundville, Alabama)

supply from their imaginations what I cannot tell fully here, the affliction and extreme necessity that these Spaniards suffered for everything needed to enable them to treat their wounds and save their lives. Even for people who were well and rested there was a great scarcity, as we shall soon see, and much more for men who had fought nine hours by the clock without stopping and had come out with so many and such severe wounds. I wish to avail myself of this means because, aside from my small ability, it is impossible that such momentous things can be written of adequately or described as they took place.

Therefore it must be considered first of all that, if they applied to the surgeon for treatment for such a multitude of wounds, there was only one in the whole army, and he was not as able and diligent as could have been desired; rather he was stupid and almost useless. Then if they asked for medicines, there were none, for the few that they were carrying, along with the olive oil they had reserved some days before for such needs, and the bandages and lint that they always had ready, and all the other linen such as sheets and shirts they could have used for making bandages and lint, and the rest of the clothing they were bringing, the Indians, as we said above, had taken into the pueblo, and the fire the Spaniards themselves set had consumed it. Then if they wished something to eat, there was nothing, because the fire had burned up the provisions that the Castilians had brought and those the Indians had in their houses, not one of which remained standing, all of them having been consumed.

Our Spaniards found themselves in these straits, without doctors or medicines, without bandages or lint, without food or clothing with which to cover themselves, without houses or even huts in which to take shelter against the cold and dew of the night. They had been deprived of all succor by the misfortunes of that day. Even if they had attempted to go in search of something for their relief, the darkness of the night would have prevented them, and not knowing where to find it, and seeing themselves all so wounded and weak from loss of blood that most of them could not stand on their feet. They had an abundance only of sighs and groans that the pain of their wounds and the poor treatment of them wrested from them.

In their hearts and aloud they called on God to protect and succor them in that affliction, and our Lord as a merciful Father aided them, by giving them an invincible spirit in that hardship, which the Spanish nation always had above all the nations of the earth to support it in its greatest necessities, and these availed themselves of it in the present one, as we shall see in the next chapter.